

Service Area Plan

Department of Social Services

Financial Assistance Programs Administration (45102)

Service Area Background Information

Service Area Description

This service area supports the supervision of Virginia's safety net programs including the Commonwealth's largest nutrition assistance program, the Food Stamp Program; financial assistance programs including the Energy Assistance Program, the General Relief Program, and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF); and the eligibility services for medical assistance programs (FAMIS, Medicaid, and State and Local Hospitalization). This service area also supports the supervision of two of the Commonwealth's largest workforce programs: the Virginia Initiative for Employment, not Welfare (VIEW) and the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program (FSET).

The functions supported by this service area include strategic planning, policy development, program development, legislative and regulatory analysis, business process reengineering, policy and information systems training, research, dissemination of best practices, information system requirements definition and user acceptance testing, contracting, performance-based budgeting and budget monitoring, program monitoring, information services and products for the general public and media, and technical assistance to the local departments of social services which implement these programs. This service area is also responsible for the provision of some direct service through the funding and management of medical services eligibility staff stationed in hospitals and health facilities throughout the Commonwealth. Finally, this service area includes a number of contracts for services which directly impact the operations at local departments of social services including contracts for translating forms to meet federal Limited English Proficiency (LEP) requirements and contracts for services that perform critical functions as part of the eligibility determination processes.

Service Area Alignment to Mission

This service area supports the mission of the Department through the supervision of programs that help individuals meet their basic human needs and move toward self-sufficiency through employment. These financial, nutrition, medical, and workforce services help individuals move out of poverty and build strong families and communities.

Service Area Statutory Authority

This service area responds to two federal oversight agencies; the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services. The Food Stamp Program is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and federal statutory authority is the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended; federal regulations are codified at Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF) is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and federal statutory authority is the Title IV-A of the Social Security Act; regulations are codified at 45 CFR. The Medicaid and FAMIS programs are also administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and federal statutory authority is Title XIX of the Social Security Act for Medicaid and Title XXI for FAMIS (the name of Virginia's State Children's Health Insurance Program); regulations are codified at 42 CFR. The Energy Assistance Program is also administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and federal statutory authority is the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Act, there are no federal regulations. State statutory authority for these programs is found at Title 63.2 of the Code of Virginia and regulations are found at Title 22 of the Virginia Administrative Code. This service area also supervises local administration of the General Relief and State and Local Hospitalization Programs; state statutory for these programs authority can be found at Title 63.2 and Title 32.1 of the Code of Virginia, respectively.

Service Area Plan

Department of Social Services

Financial Assistance Programs Administration (45102)

Service Area Customer Base

Customer(s)	Served	Potential
Federal agencies	3	3
General Public (served unknown; potential unlimited)	0	0
Local Departments of Social Services	120	120
Policy Makers	140	140

Anticipated Changes In Service Area Customer Bas

There are no anticipated changes to the customer base.

Service Area Partners

Contracted service providers

Federal government

State agencies

Virginia Institute for Social Services Training Activities (VISSTA)

Service Area Products and Services

- Support of organizations serving communities
- Economic assistance to low income families/individuals or nutrition, child care, health care eligibility, and financial assistance to low income families/individuals
- Support Services (i.e., HR, IS etc.)

Service Area Plan

Department of Social Services

Financial Assistance Programs Administration (45102)

Factors Impacting Service Area Products and Services

The principal factors impacting the products and services provided by this service area include changes in federal and state legislation, the social services system business process reengineering initiative, and the increasing workload at local departments of social services resulting from increased program caseloads. The federal legislation reauthorizing the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is imminent and the Food Stamp Act will be reauthorized during this biennium. The new legislation will place important demands on program staff and result in a myriad of policy, process, and systems changes that will have to be analyzed, implemented, and trained.

Additionally, the programs supervised under this service area are counter-cyclical. As the number of individuals living in poverty in the Commonwealth continues to rise (28% increase from 2000 – 2003), there is a concomitant caseload increase across programs. Funding for eligibility services (for these programs) at local departments of social services has not increased since 1989; therefore, the dramatic caseload increases have not been accompanied by funding increases for local departments of social services. According to the caseload standards set forth in an independent study by Horby Zellar and Associates, local departments of social services would need an additional 618 workers simply to meet minimal processing standards. This staffing shortage has implications for timeliness and accuracy of application processing; having time available to attend training and read new policy material; and the manner in which existing resources are allocated to local departments of social services.

The payment accuracy rate in the Food Stamp Program is an example of how increased workload negatively impacts service delivery. As program participation has increased dramatically in the last two years (more than 25%), the Food Stamp Program has also experienced an increase in errors as measured by the federal quality control process. According to federal law, states whose program performance is not within 105 percent of the national performance benchmark for two consecutive years face federal fiscal penalties. One of the objectives of this service area is to ensure that, through technical assistance and monitoring, local Food Stamp Program performance falls within the acceptable federal limits to avoid financial penalties and provide good customer service to low-income Virginians.

In addition to the aforementioned influences, the social services system – state and local departments of social services – will be completing a business process re-engineering initiative in August 2005. This initiative is designed to map the current business processes, recommend radical change to the processes and business model in order to improve client service and efficiency, and post a roadmap for implementation.

Reducing poverty and dependence on government financial assistance programs is a dynamic concept; different models and programs to eradicate poverty have been implemented since the New Deal. It is inevitable that new concepts and program initiatives at the state and federal levels will continue to emerge, and the challenges of implementing change while maintaining the ability to meet the basic subsistence of Virginia's needy individuals and families will continue to impact the products and services delivered through this service plan.

Service Area Plan

Department of Social Services

Financial Assistance Programs Administration (45102)

Anticipated Changes To Service Area Products and Service

As indicated above, one of the biggest challenges of this service area is the efforts of policy makers at both the national and state levels to influence a reduction in poverty; this service area must respond to these changes and maintain a continuity of services to our customers while implementing change. The implementation of new Medicare prescription drug program, Medicare Part D, will create a new pool of clients to be served by local agencies and result in additional policy development, technical assistance and program monitoring to be conducted at the service area level. Similarly federal changes to the TANF program and state efforts to reduce the number of children without adequate health insurance will create additional demands on the service area.

The Department's current emphasis on Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) will impact the products and services delivered by the services area. Many of the mechanisms used to deliver products and services have historical roots – "that's the way we've always done it." It is expected that the BPR will identify recommendations for changes in the delivery of services and products in this service area.

The use of technology to streamline the delivery of services at the local level, a major focus of the BPR, will also impact the services and products provided through this service area. The technologies currently used to determine eligibility for financial assistance are outdated and need to be updated to keep pace with available technologies used to simplify and streamline the delivery.

Service Area Financial Summary

Funding for the service area comes from federal and state sources. Support at the state level for the Medicaid and Food Stamp programs is a combination of state (50%) and federal (50%) funds. Administrative cost for the Energy Assistance Program is 100% federally funded by the LIHEAP block grant and limited to 3% of the grant by state regulation. Funding for TANF activities is a combination of TANF block grant and state maintenance of effort funding. State funds finance the activities of the smaller programs (General Relief, State and Local Hospitalization) in the service area.

	<u>Fiscal Year 2007</u>		<u>Fiscal Year 2008</u>	
	General Fund	Nongeneral Fund	General Fund	Nongeneral Fund
Base Budget	\$2,438,348	\$3,454,646	\$2,438,348	\$3,454,646
Changes To Base	\$143,637	\$166,673	\$143,637	\$166,673
SERVICE AREA TOTAL	\$2,581,985	\$3,621,319	\$2,581,985	\$3,621,319

Service Area Plan

Department of Social Services

Financial Assistance Programs Administration (45102)

Service Area Objectives, Measures, and Strategies

Objective 45102.01

Deliver timely and accurate eligibility determination services for safety net programs

Timely and accurate processing of eligibility determination for safety net programs are indicators of well-functioning processes that meet the expectations of customers.

This Objective Supports the Following Agency Goals:

- Deliver high-quality customer-focused services
(This objective is tied to Goal #4 of the VSSS strategic plan, Deliver High Quality, Customer Focused Services. Additionally, by developing program policies that address the subsistence needs of Virginia's low-income families and children, as well as developing workforce programs that prepare them for employment and enhance their employability, this service areas directly aligns with the long-term objectives of the Council on Virginia's Future to: elevate the educational preparedness and attainment of Virginia's citizens; and inspiring and supporting Virginians toward healthy lives and strong resilient families.)

This Objective Has The Following Measure(s):

● Measure 45102.01.01

Timeliness of application processing

Measure Type: Output

Measure Frequency: Quarterly

Measure Baseline: 97% compliance with federal standards.

Measure Target: 97% of all cases will be processed timely in SFY 07 and SFY 08.

Measure Source and Calculation:

Timeliness data is captured from the Department's eligibility systems. Each of the respective programs have timeliness standards as prescribed in federal or state law or regulation. Timeliness is calculated in relation to the respective standards.

● Measure 45102.01.02

Accuracy of benefit calculations

Measure Type: Output

Measure Frequency: Quarterly

Measure Baseline: 93% of Food Stamp and Medicaid cases will be processed accurately.

Measure Target: 94% of all cases will be processed accurately in SFY 07 and SFY 08.

Measure Source and Calculation:

Accuracy data is captured through independent audits of benefits issued compared to what should have been issued. Accuracy will be measured through existing processes established by the federal government for Food Stamps and Medicaid

Objective 45102.01 Has the Following Strategies:

- Implement a consistent statewide program monitoring plan.
- Simplify eligibility processes.
- Implement alternative means for individuals to access products and services.
- Focus Food Stamp error reduction initiatives on the 12 largest agencies contributing the most to the Food Stamp error rate.

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Department of Social Services

Financial Assistance Programs Administration (45102)

Objective 45102.02

To have a workforce which posses the necessary skills and is capable of meeting the demands of diverse and multi-faceted position

The skill set needed to function in this service area have evolved and require greater technical and analytical skills. Additionally, in order to retain staff, there should be a clear staff development plan for advancement.

This Objective Supports the Following Agency Goals:

- Cultivate a diverse workforce capable of accomplishing the system's mission
(The objective to "have a workforce that has the necessary skills and is capable of meeting the demands of diverse and multi-faceted position" is directly related to VSSS Strategic Plan Goal 5. This objective also aligns to the long-term objective of the Council on Virginia's Future to be one of the best managed state in the nation. Further, an exemplary workforce in this service area can inspire and support Virginians, especially low-income Virginians, toward healthy lives and resilient families.)

This Objective Has The Following Measure(s):

● **Measure 45102.02.00**

The number of resignations from positions in this service area for reasons other than retirement.

Measure Type: Output

Measure Frequency: Quarterly

Measure Baseline: New measure, baseline data not available. Baseline will be established using FY05 data.

Measure Target: Specific target will be determined once baseline is established.

Measure Source and Calculation:

Human Resource Management – Number of resignations monthly as a ratio of the eligibility workforce.

Objective 45102.02 Has the Following Strategies:

- Conduct salary study to ensure positions in this service area are compensated comparable to other position in the Department and statewide.
- Develop a career track.
- Review job postings to ensure job descriptions include necessary skills and competencies.